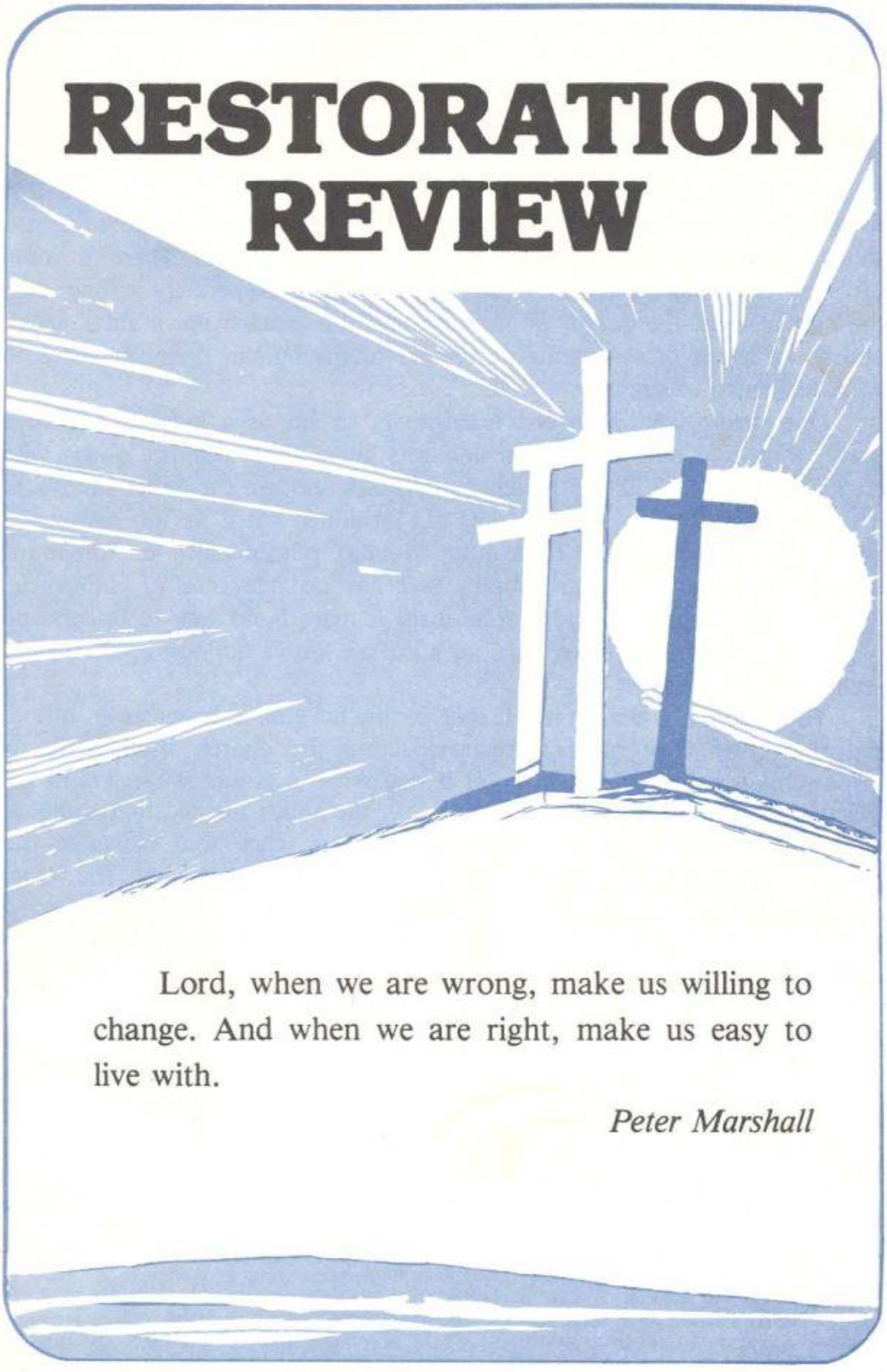
RESTORATION REVIEW



Lord, when we are wrong, make us willing to change. And when we are right, make us easy to live with.

Peter Marshall

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The Doe of the Dawn: A Christian World View . . .

THE REALITY OF SIN

One of the most poignant titles ever given to a book was Karl Menninger's *Whatever Became of Sin?,* a 1972 publication. As a psychiatrist Menninger concluded that man's inhumanity to man cannot be explained simply in terms of deprivation, poverty, and ignorance. There is more involved than mental illness. There is something desperately wrong with the human race, the doctor points out, and the explanation is theological. and so he asked those seeking an answer to the human predicament as to what happened to sin.

One theologian likens our insensitivity to sin to a lady at a garden party being told that an escaped lion was but a short distance away, who responds "Oh, yes" as she nonchalantly takes another cucumber sandwich. The idea of sin has not only become old-fashioned but it has no real meaning to the modern mind. It is only "Sunday school talk" or something ignorant preachers harangue about, and has no relevance to the crucial issues of the twentieth century. The truth is there is no way to understand twentieth century man or to have an adequate world outlook apart from a realistic view of sin.

The problem is not so much that people have no concept at all of sin, but that their view of it is distorted, and the church itself is partly responsible for this. A case in point is that when a group of our youth got together to watch John Wayne's *True Grit*, the adults insisted that someone sit by the controls and turn down the volume when foul language was used. C. S. Lewis admonished us to realize that things like four-letter words and even unchastity and drunkenness are but "fleabites" in comparison to what he called "the great sin," which is pride or self-conceit, which includes religious pride.

There are those sins that matter most, and Satan deceives us when we camouflage the real sins by attacking the fleabites. Jesus had this problem with the church of his day. The Pharisees were preoccupied with rules like eating only with washed hands. Jesus observed that only those things that enter a man's heart can defile him, and in this context he named the sins that really matter: evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. These defile the soul, Jesus says, because they proceed from the heart of man. These sins have to do either with idolizing one's self or using and abusing other people.

It is unfortunate that the world sees much of the church engrossed in pharisaical ethics while glossing over the great sins. This is evident in the "wet or dry" elections so common in Texas. The Baptists lead the fight and if one listened to the rhetoric he would suppose

that it is beer-drinking that defiles the man, not unwashed hands. And yet in such campaigns it is "the great sin" of pride that is often evident on all sides of the issue, along with a strong dose of hate. And one scholar who has lingered long with the problem of sin insists that if one germinal term links all sins together it would be *hate.*

What have we done to the world's impression of the church's view of sin when Christians spend a fortune on a political campaign to keep beer out of a community, when no such dollars go to feed the hungry or aid the dispossessed of the world. And the church's politics is often the pride of power and numbers (After all, the Baptist Church is the state church of Texas!), and the rhetoric is often hateful. Pride and hate over against beer drinking, or pantsuits or dancing or smoking pot! It has not been all that long since the lad home from college was despised for his long hair, while his thieving, covetous father, even as an elder, faired without censure.

So, if we make an impact upon the world in reference to this subject we must deal with the *nature* of sin, along with its cause, consequence, and cure. We are talking about a disease, humanity's most fatal malady, one that destroys the soul as well as the body.

Sin is many things, but it is a *thing*, not some abstraction. Strictly speaking, there are only sins, not sin. It is not something inherited, but something thought, said, or done. It emanates from man's will, his *self*-will, so that sin is basically inordinate self-love. While there are sins of both the flesh (carnality or sensuality) and the mind (emotional and intellectual), they all emanate from selfish pride. Gluttony and fornication are sensual sins, while deceit and slander are mental, but they all find root in man's conceit.

Augustine sought to classify all sins as "carnalities" or "animosities," and he concluded that the latter, which is really *hate*, is the more serious. Drunkenness and sexual aberrations are sins, Augustine would insist, but not as deadly as heartlessness and ruthlessness. It is noteworthy that most if not all of the seven deadly sins, catalogued by the medieval church as pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony, lust, are more mental than fleshly. Since avarice is greed for possessions, and lust is inordinate sexual desire (even if licit), and gluttony is lust for food, these would appear to be strictly fleshly or carnal, but they are also mental in that the mind is distorting the rightful place of possessions, sex, and food. Things, sex, and food are no longer a beautiful part of life, properly attuned to other values, but they become life itself. In fact, these sins find no beauty in food, sex, or things. They are to be voraciously consumed for their own sake, and so become the point of life. This makes them *thinking* sins as well as fleshly, or wrongheadedness or perversity of thought.

If pride or inordinate self-love is the basic sin, it is because it chooses not to know God or to ignore him. This makes willful ignorance and rebellion the heart of sin. Man does not believe in a God who is to judge all creation because he does not want to. He wants to direct his own course and do his own thing, and be hanged with God. This is implicit in the way people live, as if there was no Creator to whom we are to give an account. This is defiant rebellion against our Maker, and it is the taproot of sin. We can become so self-important, so grossly conceited, that we find no place for either gods or devils. This is the meaning of *ungodliness,* which is a biblical definition of sin.

This is why sin has such little meaning in our secularistic, humanistic society. If there is no God, or if he doesn't matter, then there is no sin or it does not matter. Sin is even taken lightly, the butt of jokes, especially lust. Sin is fun to our world, except for such sins as pride, envy, deceit. When we despise a conceited person, as most of us do (and it is no fun thing), we are at least moving within the shadow of the reality of sin.

If sin can be seen not only as criminal but also as betrayal, we get close to its true nature. It is one thing for a man to cheat on his wife, but something else for him to betray her. In cheating on her he might still love her (even if he loves himself more!), while in betraying her he is renouncing and repudiating her. Sin is betrayal against God, a repudiation of him who created us in his own image. And a betrayer, whether of wife, country or God, has a hard time finding his way back home. Usually he doesn't care that much. He doesn't know where home is.

As for the consequence of sin, it is by its very nature destructive. It destroys one's self, in body and spirit alike, and it destroys his relationship with others. Moreover it kills something deep inside him, that mysterious unifying principle that makes him a person, so that he now sees life as alien and meaningless. "The wages of sin is death" is a dreadful verdict. Helplessness and hopelessness are often the result, even when one does not realize it. He turns to anesthetics such as a pursuit of things, sex, food, money, pleasure, which are only counterfeits of what he really needs. He is separated from God, the terrible consequence of sin. Certain sins especially, such as betrayal of a friend or a crime against a child, brings one into a crisis with God, even the unbeliever. One is not as much an unbeliever as is supposed when he cries out in his misery, "Oh, God, what have I done-" He must realize that he's been doing it all along, and that it is only amidst crisis that he has an inkling of it.

The Scriptures make it clear that sin is both universal and inevitable. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" the apostle assures us in Rom. 3:23, and to account for the origin and inevitability of sin he draws upon the Old Covenant Scriptures, particularly the sin of Adam. "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through

sin, and so death spread to all men because all men have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Notice the phrase *all men have sinned,* which is the KJV rendition. Other versions, by omitting the *have,* imply that all men sinned in Adam. By including the *have* --- "all men have sinned" --- Paul is saying that we are all sinners, not because we sinned when Adam did, but because we too have sinned, apparently for the same reason Adam did, because we are human. We may inherit the consequence of Adam's sin (death), but not the personal guilt of his sin. We are guilty because *we* have sinned.

As for the inevitability of sin, it is one of those stubborn mysteries that continues to baffle man. We might suppose that from the billions that are born there would be an occasional super saint that would commit no sin. We know that that is not the case. We sin because we are human beings, which is the reason Adam sinned. Calvin called it "original sin" or "inherent sin," which may be all right if those terms mean that man by nature has not only a proclivity to sin but an unalterable bent toward sin. We may not be *born* sinners, not in the sense of being guilty, but we are inexorably destined to sin when we come into this world.

Reinhold Niebuhr, who captured the realism of sin more than any modern theologian, accounted for the inevitability of sin on the grounds of man's finitude and his freedom to choose. Man sins because he is free and because he is man and not God. That explanation may be as good as any.

The cure for sin is as gloriously baffling as other facets of "the mystery of godliness." We only need to believe it, not understand it. After indicting all men as sinners in Rom. 3:23, the apostle goes on to say, "They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

If the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life. The answer to sin is a gift from God. It is a *gift,* with nothing to be earned. The answer is Jesus Christ, whom God gave to sinful man, so that through his sacrificial death man might be set free from sin *through their faith in him.*

So man is saved from his betrayal of and rebellion to the God of heaven through his faithful response to what the Father has given, Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, writing from a Jewish perspective, refers to this renewal experience as "the circumcision of Christ," a circumcision made without hands, one that cleanses the heart rather than cuts away at the flesh, Then he says, "You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12).

So the answer to man's predicament is a circumcision of the heart, which is the seat of sin. This is realized through faith in "the working of God" which is expressed in baptism, which is both a burial and a resurrection with Christ. These point up what is necessary for sinful man: he must die to his sins, and so he is buried (with Christ), and he must become a new creation, and so he is raised to a new life in Christ, symbolized in his resurrection from a watery grave.

But it is all the work of God, his gift and his grace, while man remains completely undeserving. "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways." --- *the Editor*

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THE UNDERBELLY OF THE CHURCH

I have more than common interest in a letter that has come to me indirectly from Sweden. It has to do with a person's disappointment that his friend, who happens to be a friend of mine as well, was not made the next archbishop of Sweden. The reader may not realize that the Church of Sweden (Lutheran) is the state church of that country, even though the "free churches," as they are called, are completely free to practice their religion. Being a state church it is understandable that the Church of Sweden would be as politically-oriented as other churches.

Our mutual friend was on the verge of receiving the appointment, it seems, but was cut down at the last moment by some contrivance. This concerned leader in the Swedish church expressed his anguish in these words:

> He was gunned down at the last minute, so to speak, and I saw the underbelly of the church at close range. It's not a pretty sight I've seen it before, but this time it really got to me. Broke my spirit, took my Jesus. But I'm back, hit the library and the NT hit me. And the church, that leprous bride of Christ, has claimed me again. What can I say, I'm a sucker for a beautiful dame.

Coming from such a different background from most of us, this brother's language may be so strange to us that we may miss what I believe to be both a realistic and meaningful concept of the church catholic. We may even be offended by such language as "the underbelly of the church" and "that leprous bride of Christ," and we are not used to folk referring to the church as "a beautiful dame." He also depicts his trauma with "Broke my spirit, took my Jesus," and not many of us talk that way, not even when we have

similar experiences. But church politics we know, state church or not, and I am persuaded that we have a lot in common with this troubled Swede. If not, we ought to have!

By “the underbelly of the church” we take him to mean “those who are somewhat,” the power structure, the nerve center where the decisions are made. As an “insider” he has been there often, but this time he had a ringside seat and got a good look, and he found it an ugly sight, even if it was made up of high clergy and top statesmen. He saw that wrong ruled the throne and that right did not prevail. He was referring to the sinfulness of the church: its arrogant power and its manipulative tactics. He watched as they “shot down” our deserving friend, who was a professor to me at Harvard.

We do not have to be a state church to get the picture, and we well know that we are equally guilty. Many of our preachers have been devastated by a tyrannical eldership, and our preachers have been known to destroy each other. Our most creative, spiritual, and intelligent members are often forced to find refuge in other churches for no greater sin than choosing to think for themselves. It is probable that our underbelly is as ugly as the Swedish church, and those of us who would like to change it are not likely to fair any better than our Swedish friend.

If our friend would say that the sad experience “took my Jesus,” we conclude that his faith was affected only temporarily. He snapped back, probably because his faith is in the Person rather than the institution. He seems to have the order straight, Jesus first, then the church.

The man is a reformer at heart. He would make a good “Campbellite,” for he sees that however remiss the church becomes, “that leprous bride of Christ,” it is still Christ’s church. He would no doubt tell us, as did our pioneers, that the church always needs reforming and that reformation is a slow process. And you can tell that while his frame of reference is his own denomination he thinks in terms of the church universal. She has a claim on him. He can’t give her up, just as Jesus can’t, and so he reported in with “I’m back.” Where else can one go? Where is the perfect church. If there wasn’t one in New Testament times, there isn’t likely to be at any time.

Our friend is where we all are, a part of the leprous bride of Christ. The offensive adjective is not all that different from the ones Jesus himself used: poor, blind, destitute, naked, dead, lukewarm. But Jesus did not leave. He stands knocking at the door of his own church --- at the underbelly? --- seeking entrance. But our Swedish brother seems to grasp *the whole of things* better than we. We often give up because we don’t understand the true nature of the church, while he hangs in because he does.

There is heavy theology in that line “I’m a sucker for a beautiful dame. “ We love the church because it bears the image of Christ, in spite of (or perhaps because of) its humanity. We are fallen beings, but we are *redeemed* fallen beings. We are no longer simply sinners like the rest of mankind, but sinners saved by grace. But still it is sinners that make up the church, and so the underbelly will not always be attractive. We hold “the beauty of holiness” as an ideal, exemplified in Christ, but hardly ever attained by the church.

I can identify with our chastened Swedish friend. While that part of “the beautiful dame” that I know best is Churches of Christ and Christian Churches rather than the Church of Sweden, I too am stuck and cannot and will not leave. I may quarrel with her but it is a lover’s quarrel. And she is beautiful to me because she is like Jesus, despite an unkempt underbelly.

After all, many a man has found refuge in the bosom of a woman with dirty linen. He who sits upon the throne promises to make all things new and clean in a new heaven and a new earth. That hope is enough for *me*. Until then I will go on urging that beautiful dame to open the door to the beckoning Christ. --- *the Editor*

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BEHAVING AS VISITORS OUGHT

We have many visitors at our house, scores and scores of them from far and wide every year, and we enjoy everyone of them. They are like our grandchildren: we are glad when they come and glad when they leave! Seriously, we gain more than we give when these sojourners come our way. Ouida and I often marvel at how different God’s children are from each other, and we sometimes wonder how a certain man and a certain woman ever made it to the altar together. The Lord does wonderful things, doesn’t he?

We would be more than amazed if a visitor ever backed a van to our front door and unloaded his belongings and became a permanent resident. Even Ouida would be non-plussed!

While we all may sometimes stay longer than we should, we keep our perspective and never forget that we are visitors. We keep saying such nonsense as “Don’t go to any trouble,” knowing full well that company is always trouble. It is better to say, as I usually do even when visiting kinfolk, “We will be there only two nights, so it won’t last long.” In any event we never forget that we are company and we never settle in for good. And as a rule we are on our good behavior and do not do such things as go to the breakfast table in

our shorts, or even with our hair still rolled up. We behave as visitors ought, usually, don't we?

In this morning's reading in the Scriptures (you see that my little essays are sometimes spontaneous), I was led to ponder the role of a visitor while looking at I Pet. 2:11 in the Jerusalem Bible: "I urge you, my dear people, while you are visitors and pilgrims, to keep yourselves free from the selfish passions that attack the soul."

This injunction reaches out to us where we are most vulnerable: *being in the world it is so easy to be like and think like the world.* And the world's most deceitful ploy is the illusion of permanence. While everyone is of course aware that death eventually comes, it has no impact upon their lives and does not influence their behavior. Being out of sight death is out of mind. And so people act as if they are going to be around forever. They certainly do not think of themselves as visitors and pilgrims and that in awhile they will be going elsewhere.

If we do not watch that will also be our conception of life. That is why an apostle of Christ urges us to keep in mind that we are but visitors in this world and that we are to behave that way. We are able to adjust our thinking to the fact that the children will be up and gone in another ten years, or that we will retire in a few more years, but it is more difficult for us to face the reality that we will be "going home" in another twenty years or so.

That is what Peter is saying to us. This world is not our home, and when we leave this world we are not leaving home but going home. Those who created *E. T.* (one of our readers wrote that she saw the film several times and wept and laughed all the way!) caught this idea beautifully. E.T. may have enjoyed his sojourn on planet Earth, but he never forgot that he was a pilgrim and he knew where home was. We are not all that wise, for we act as if we are to be here forever. We have backed up our van and unloaded our belongings, including our values. We are here to stay! Or so it would seem.

I was reminded of this when counseling with a woman whose home was breaking up. She was concerned that as a divorcee she might not make it financially. Knowing something of her resources and realizing she had already lived most of her years, I had no better sense than to say something like "Unless you plan to pass your estate along to someone else, you are going to have plenty to live on for the remaining years." You would have thought I had slapped her. She did not want to be reminded, even if she was a believer, that we were talking about only a few more years.

This is one area in which I have disciplined my thinking fairly well, perhaps too well, for I am *very* conscious of the brevity of life, and virtually every day those words of the psalmist tiptoe across my mind: *Teach us to number our days that we might apply our hearts unto wisdom.* I realize that everything is numbered, not just the years, but the days with Ouida, the hours I spend at this typewriter, the moments I spend in prayer. Even now Ouida and I are planning to buy or build a new home, something smaller and with but one story, but we are well aware that, except for a few years, we will be building for someone else. And that is OK. What is not OK is for us to be deceived by the world into believing that there is anything permanent about our way of life. We are bound for glory! Nothing else really matters all that much.

Ouida just came into the workshop to cut some plates for our next mailing (well over a hundred new subscribers so far, she tells me), and planting her on my knee I read her this article up to this point, seeking her counsel. She not only approved but told me a story that I will pass along to you, something she had read from stuff mailed to her mother, who lives with us.

There was this man who went into eternity. Expressing concern for his children, St. Peter told him not to worry for they would be along in a few minutes. Then added, “And in a few minutes after that your children’s children will be along!”

From the aspect of eternity it might well be something like that. What is important is that we not allow the world to sell us a bill of goods, including a false concept of time. It *is* later than we think, and so we must apply our minds unto wisdom. Keep growing! Keep learning! Keep serving! Time is of the essence and we must be good stewards of every hour. What is time anyway? Not years and weeks and days and hours; they but measure time. Time is experience, and it is the experiences we have that count, such as meaningful conversation, prayerful meditation, and doing something for someone else. When death marks the end of such experiences in this world, they but continue in a more glorious way in the world to come.

And that is the real conflict in this world --- not so much between matter and spirit, but between the values of this world and the values of the world to come. This world’s values, whether houses or TV or General motors stock, are OK insofar as they go, but they are counterfeits when placed alongside the values of the world to come. So we must live in this world by the ethics of the next world.

That is what Peter means when he says, while urging upon us a *pilgrim consciousness,* “keep yourselves from the selfish passions that attack the soul.” We are constantly under attack by the faulty ethics of the world, such as “Everybody does it,” and so we must guard against selfish passions. But how? By a *pilgrim consciousness!* This world is not our

home; our citizenship is in heaven. Ouida and I spent an evening recently at a fancy hotel with the Harvard Club of Dallas, sitting with big-time lawyers, doctors and financiers. It really wasn't our kind of world, but we made it fine and perhaps made a slight contribution to the affair. But it didn't matter all that much anyway, for we were but visitors, even if an alumnus.

This whole world is like that. There is a sense in which I love it, like the Father did and does, and I might even die for it. I will certainly seek to make it better during my short sojourn. I am *in* the world but not *of* it. I will serve it but it will not be my master. I may be confined to it for the present but it does not and never will own me. Like that night at the Harvard Club, I am here for the moment and I will serve for the moment, but it is only for the evening, for tomorrow I go home. Like E.T., I know where home is, except that mine is for real! --- *the Editor*

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LETTERS TO FELLOW EDITORS

(The following two letters by the editor of this journal may be of interest to our readers. The first is to William S. Cline, new editor of the *Firm Foundation*, while the second is to Bobbie Lee Holley, who is yet in her first year as editor of *Mission.* The second letter appeared in the October issue of *Mission* and we reproduce it here with permission of the editor. We have not yet heard whether Editor Cline plans to include the first letter among the responses he requested. I would hope that there might be more of this kind of exchange between our editors. I especially urge more discussion on the nature of the church and the nature of our own heritage. --- *the Editor*)

To the Editor, *Firm Foundation*

Congratulations upon your new beginning. Since you invite responses, I have a word concerning your very first article. Dr. Warren does not meet the issue in insisting that the only Christians are those in the church of Christ, for virtually all believers agree that if one is a Christian he is a part of the Body of Christ or Christ's church. The issue is whether those people who take the name "the church of Christ" or "the Church of Christ," generally associated with the *Gospel Advocate,* the *Firm Foundation*, and such colleges as Freed-Hardeman and ACU, are exclusively the church of Christ and therefore the only Christians. The issue is what Dr. Warren means by "the church of Christ."

He closed his essay by asking, "What, then, can a man mean if he says, 'We are *not* the *only* Christians?'" There is nothing new in the claim to be a Christian only. It was a motto of our pioneers when they launched the movement "to unite the Christians in all the sects,"

the plea being *We are Christians only but not the only Christians.* It was a plea for unity. While believers could never agree to being Baptist Christians or Presbyterian Christians, they could agree to being *just* Christians, Christians *only.* Our pioneers believed there were Christians in all the denominations, else they would not have started a movement to unite them. One is not a Christian because he is a Baptist or a Presbyterian but because he is *in Christ* and a part of the church catholic, just as we are Christians for the same reason, not because we belong to "the Church of Christ," which since around 1890 has become a distinct religious body or denomination. If we are not a denomination with our own exclusive name, colleges, seminaries, papers, missions, publishing houses, it would be interesting for Dr. Warren to tell us what we would have to do to be one. Others, including the Christian Church, make the same claim. Are we not a denomination because we say we are not?

To the Editor, *Mission*

While I appreciate your invitation to respond to the three reviews of my book *The Stone-Campbell Movement,* I feel like the man who was being run out of town on a rail, who said, "If it weren't for the honor of all this I had just as soon walk!"

Whatever else may be said of my history, it has been the most reviewed of anything like it. All three churches have issued histories in recent years, but my book has been the subject of more reviews, *pro* and *con*, than the three others combined. There is an important reason why. Each of the other three said what was supposed to be said. While fine books, they were "house" jobs, so critical reviews were few. My book is at least impartial in that it treats all three churches of the Movement alike, according to the facts, as the author interpreted those facts.

College Press, representing one of these churches, is to be commended for leaving me free, even when pressures were applied, to tell it like it happened. When copy proofs of some of the chapters were circulated among leaders at the North American Christian Convention, they "took off like Roman candles," according to the publisher. In deference to "editor bishops" still living, I agreed not to call any names but simply tell what the *journal* said and did!

President Thompson of Emmanuel School of Religion warned in one of the introductions that "Everyone will not like this book," but I am nonetheless impressed with the abundance of commendation that has come from the rank and file. And it was to them that I was writing more than to the scholars. It is not exactly a "country and western" book, but it is anecdotal and is written from the perspective of a journalist or reporter. Scholars can hardly be expected to appreciate this, and they can be forgiven for seeing history largely in terms of their special interests. Even though the book has eighteen chapters and 739 pages,

some specialists have chosen to judge the book in the light of one or two chapters. The rank and file, on the other hand, are more interested in "the story," as to what really happened, and less concerned for minutiae. And they like the anecdotes, with many reporting that history can be fun after all.

As for your three reviewers, I appreciate their painstaking labor, and if and when I revise the book I will consider each criticism carefully, some of which will prove most helpful in a revised edition. While they are wrong in some of the details (Joe Dampier *is* the only living member of the *original* Restudy Commission, Dean Walker serving later; Barton Stone *did* write in the present tense in 1827, insisting that "we have not separated from the Presbyterian church at large"), they are nonetheless appreciated and heeded.

I am persuaded that your readers, like mine, are not so much interested in the myriad of details that reviewers are prone to deal with, but with the main thrust of a book, or with its guts, if it has any. I would that the reviewers of *The Stone-Campbell Movement* address themselves more to these propositions, which I believe are clearly set forth in the book.

1. The Stone-Campbell Movement was a unity movement. It was in fact *three* unity movements that became one, despite their diversity. The earliest documents attest to this. It was a passion for the unity of all believers that launched the movements, united them, and sustained them without any open splits for two generations.

2. It was not a restoration movement in the sense that that term is usually employed, which is that "the true church," which can be identified in exact detail in the New Testament, ceased to exist, and had to be "restored" (not reformed!). I have yet to find that Barton W. Stone (the rightful founder of the Movement if we name but one) ever referred to "restoration" even once, while unity was his constant theme. He often referred to his and Campbell's work as "the reformation" or "the 19th century reformation." This means that he recognized that the church has always existed, just as Christ said it would, but that it needs renewal or reformation, as it always has.

3. Walter Scott spoke of the "restored gospel" and Alexander Campbell of a "restoration of the ancient order," but like Stone, this was in order to reform the church that had existed since Pentecost. Campbell was fond of referring to a restoration of "the primitive faith," but he *never* (insofar as I have been able to ascertain) referred to restoring the church itself. He thus called his work "the New Reformation," which involved restoring *to* the church (that did exist) what he believed was wanting, particularly unity, the Bible, and the Lord's day and Lord's supper as ordinances, along with baptism for remission of sins.

4. The restoration heresy, as above defined, was dominant in the Radical Reformation, especially with the Anabaptists, and was then and always has been divisive, so that there have been upwards of 200 sects of restorationism, each presuming to be "the true church," duly restored after the New Testament pattern. In my book I told of the massive research of George Williams of Harvard, who found restorationism inherent in the sects of the Radical Reformation, which rejected Luther's Reformation and counted all churches as false and themselves as the only true Christians. This is restorationism, but it is not the position of the pioneers of the Stone-Campbell Movement, who called themselves reformers and their efforts as "the reformation." They always recognized other believers as Christians, and Thomas Campbell launched his unity movement with "The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one." He thus insisted that the church existed and that it was one before he ever launched his movement. This one principle alone precludes any possibility of making restorationists of the Campbells.

5. But restorationism, with its attendant legalism and exclusivism, was a force in the Movement from the outset. This became evident to Alexander Campbell in the negative response he received to his Lunenberg Letter in which he conceded the unimmersed to be Christians. While he saw his people as Christians only, there were many who believed they were the only Christians. When this view gained dominance, which it did following the death of Campbell, it divided the Movement that was launched to unite the Christians in all the sects.

6. All three churches (denominations) growing out of this unity effort have betrayed their heritage. Christian Churches and Churches of Christ have failed by adopting restorationism and presuming themselves to be the "one true church" to the exclusion of others, and one of these churches does not even accept the other one as part of "the Lord's church," which is the tragic price of restorationism. These two churches call not for unity in diversity as did their forebears, but for conformity based upon a peculiar (and differing) interpretation of "the New Testament pattern." While the Disciples have properly rejected restorationism and preserved a passion for unity, they have lost their passion for "a church founded upon the Bible," to quote their own pioneers, and appear to be stymied by structures, both ecclesial and ecumenical. Our forebears sought unity among *believers*, convinced that this emphasis would take care of ecclesial or structural union.

7. There is however a remnant in all these churches that have the spirit of the Stone-Campbell Movement, and these generalizations clearly do not apply to all leaders and congregations. There is in fact a substantial reaction against the sectism and exclusivism that made havoc of a glorious heritage.

From the various reviews of my book I have had but two real surprises. One out of Abilene, from a teacher of Restoration history, was that I erred mainly in seeing our heritage as a *unity* movement more than as a restoration movement. Since all the founding documents (at least five in number) are *unity* documents, with only one of them even mentioning restoration, that criticism surprised me. That professor would have to reject' the slogan, "Christian unity is our business," not to mention "In matters of faith, unity, etc." But that illustrates what has happened to us: restorationism is our business these days, not unity.

The other surprise was from a *Mission* review, which was that my book in some ways tells more about me than it does the Movement. But I presume that I am not allowed to conclude that that is why it is selling so well!

I am not surprised by the reaction to my challenge of restorationism. It is worse than taking the angel Moroni from the Mormons! And much worse than taking Westminster from the Presbyterians. One would think that restorationism is in the New Testament! I concede that we are probably stuck with *restoration* (but not the *ism*, please), so I agree with those who seek to redefine it, such as Dean Walker's "renewal through recovery," more recently popularized by Carl Ketcherside, or make it a synonym for reformation, as Campbell did. But this calls for a change in attitude toward other churches and other Christians, not simply a new definition.

There are those who want me to repent, and I promise to do so if they will find in our history the likes of Barton W. Stone ever saying "Let restorationism be our polar star." The way it has read all these years, to the shame of most of us, is "Let Christian unity be our polar star."

History book or no, I cast my lot with those who believe we should look to *that* polar star, for it will bear us along on the church's intended course, the redemption of a lost world.

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LEARNING TO LIVE WITH OUR DECISIONS

When Dr. James Dobson, the man who has the answers on rearing difficult children (which of course includes all children!), was asked to name the most important thing for parents to learn, a kind of bottom line of all his teaching, he came up with: *if you can but teach your children that they have to live with their decisions.*

I was impressed that one who has produced dozens of video tapes and books on “how to” could come up with a one-liner like that. And what wisdom fills those words! It implies, of course, that a parent is able to let the child make his own decisions, at least some of the time. I can see a parent saying, “If you choose to use your savings on going to Six Flags again, then you’ll not have the money for the bicycle you’re saving for, but the decision is yours.” And of course the parent must be firm enough not to interfere with the law that one must reap what he sows. Dobson would not doubt insist that a parent makes a big mistake when she tries to get her kids off the hook once they are there by their own free choice.

After several tries as both parent and grandparent I can only say that Dobson’s rule is easier said than done. Dobson knows, of course, that some children seem never to learn the things that really matter, such as responsibility, and we can’t always sock them with the old law of Karma that the Hindus understand better than we. After all, if a kid carelessly loses his coat, then his cap, then his gloves, do you allow him to go to school bereft of such items? They also lose their glasses, their books, and sometimes even their shoes. As they get older it gets even more serious --- wasting time, money, and opportunity, running with the wrong crowd, abusing both mind and body. Their choices! And they don’t seem to learn from their mistakes.

Since we can in retrospect see the same irresponsibility in our own youth, if we are honest with ourselves, and by no means free of it in our adulthood, we can only conclude that there is something dreadfully wrong with the human race. We are fallen creatures, stymied by sin. So there is no way for us to live with our decisions except by God’s grace, and by that same grace we can learn to make more workable decisions.

Decision-making is the stuff of life. It isn’t just the kids who make decisions without considering the consequences down the road. All the human race has a proclivity for mocking God, so it is understandable that the apostle would urge believers as he does in Gal. 6:7: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” The law is a stubborn one. Even if we are repentant and turn our lives around, we still have to suffer from the profligacy of our earlier years.

Mortimer J. Adler, who advocates an education based on the great books and great ideas, says that mankind’s most perplexing problem is finding a way to persuade the youth to benefit from the wisdom of their elders. Why must each generation make the same mistakes as their parents, having to learn the hard way on their own, only to become parents themselves, bewildered that *their* children will not listen to them? Again, it is our fallenness. It is the message Paul is trying to teach us in *Romans.* We must walk by *faith,* which may mean God’s faithfulness as well as our own trust in God.

It helps me as a parent and a grandparent to know what I am up against. I am sensitive enough to what sin has done to the human race that I am no longer easily shocked. While I shun pessimism and cynicism, I am a realist and so my expectations of others are moderate. I like Alexander Campbell's "Expect great things from God, do great things for God," and I make demands for myself, but I find life easier to negotiate if I keep on trying to improve myself rather than try to change others.

Now and again I find myself saying to Ouida when we are disappointed with choices made by our children: *we can live before them what we believe to be the good life, and that's about all we can do, except to pray for them.* That is especially the case after they grow older. But Dobson 'is right: if when they are young we can implant within them the inexorable law of sowing and reaping, that they have to live with their decisions, we do them a great service. To do that without "lecturing" requires wisdom that may come only through practice and prayer.

Decision-making has its other side. We must teach ourselves and our children alike that firmness and decisiveness ennobles character. Through fear of making the wrong decision we may become indecisive. When we see what is right, we must do it boldly; if it is wrong, leave it undone. We are only half alive when we do things in halves. If we cannot decidedly say *No!* when we are tempted, we are on the way to destruction.

Martin Luther may have had his weaknesses but indecisiveness was not one of them. "Here I stand," he cried before his accusers, "I can do no otherwise. God help me, *Amen.*" It was a decision he was willing to live with, and one that he almost died with!

Being a strong believer in the human will, I see Dobson's rule as a rule for all of life, and not simply in child-rearing. A man can *will* (resolutely decide) to be a loving and thoughtful husband. A woman can *will* to be a gracious and beautiful person. We can all *will* to be courteous, caring persons. Love is as much (maybe more) a matter of will as it is of feeling. A person with a prudish, factious heart can change by making the decision to be different. God helps those to victory who make such decisions. So, not only *must* we live with our decisions, we *can* live with our decisions. It must be largely the case that if we make the wrong decisions it is because we do not want to make the right decisions. The wrong decision is often the easier one, such as not keeping one's word or not paying an honest debt. It is noble to say "I was wrong and I am sorry," but too few of us decide to make such statements, however appropriate they would be. Admittedly, the tougher decisions are often painful, such as facing up to our own ignorance, but they bring great reward after awhile. We must all guard against the malady of not *really* wanting the kingdom of God within us.

William James, the Harvard philosopher of yesteryear, applied this sort of thinking to belief in God. Belief in God is a crucial issue, he insisted, in that it is unavoidable, momentous, and live. Many of life's questions, he said, are avoidable, trivial and dead or irrelevant, but the question of God is related to our very being. This being the case, one must (it is forced) decide either to believe or disbelieve. The doubter, who tries to postpone a decision, is really deciding *not* to believe.

But one *can* believe, James argued, by willing to believe, for the evidence for believing is at least as strong as for not believing. And so his "will to believe" became widely acclaimed as a challenge to the skeptics. James would insist on the obverse, that people do not believe in God because they don't want to!

It may be true of so much of life. We can see the good more than the bad if we want to. We can believe the best about people if we want to. We can put the best interpretation on what happens instead of the worst if we want to. We can be joyful, hopeful, trustful, loving in all of life's endeavors if we want to be.

Perhaps this is what Jesus has been trying to teach us, as per Jn. 7:17: "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know the doctrine." It is a point to be pondered that the glories of heaven depend upon the decisions we make. --- *the Editor*

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BOOK NOTES

The Death of the Custodian, which is a study of the covenants, was one of Carl Ketcherside's most effective books. It has been republished under the title *That The World May Believe* and is very suitable for mass distribution. We can supply them to you for 1.95 each or three for 5.00, post-paid. Why not get one for your own library and two for acquaintances that need to better understand a covenant-making God?

There is now a reliable translation of the New Testament for children, written at the third grade level, and not simply a paraphrase like the *Living Bible*, which is not as acceptable. James Dobson says of the *International Children's Version:* "Finally, a Bible children can read and understand." We will send you one for 12.95 postpaid.

Dwight Stevenson's *The Voice of the Golden Oracle*, which is the story of the greatest evangelist of our history, Walter Scott. This book has difficulty staying in print, so you had better send for your copy at 6.50 postpaid. The binding is beautifully done and the print is clear and readable, and the story is superb.

K. C. Moser was a "prophet of grace" among Churches of Christ in the previous generation. His lone voice can still be heard in his two exciting books that continue to be kept in print, *The Way of Salvation* and *The Gist of Romans*, which are 5.95 each postpaid.

The Stealing of America by John W. Whitehead is a provocative treatment of how our government has slowly imposed itself upon our rights as citizens, in the home, in church, in education. He charges Christians for being so passive as to allow even the courts of our land to take away our constitutional rights. You owe it to yourself to give this very responsible writer a hearing on a vital subject. 6.95 postpaid.

Another gripping book is *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* by Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop, who is surgeon general of the United States. It is a manifesto on the sacredness of human life and lays bare what is happening to the human race behind closed doors, particularly hospital doors. 6.50 postpaid.

A Short History of the Early Church by Harry R. Boer tells in concise terms what happened from Paul to Augustine, including an easy-to-understand treatment of such heresies as Gnosticism, Marcionism, Montanism (one learns that they are modern as well as ancient), as well as the persecutions, the great councils of the church, and such leaders as Ambrose and Jerome. 5.50 postpaid.

We are blessed that Robert Richardson's *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* remains in print. This book is within itself an education on the Stone-Campbell Movement. 21.95 postpaid, two volumes in one, very readable print, handsomely bound.

And you are to be reminded that our own *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett, while out of print just now, is expected to be in its second printing by the time you receive this journal. Send us your order and we will send you a copy as soon as they are ready. 21.95 postpaid.

And our bound volume for 1981-82, entitled *Jesus Today*, is available for only 8.50, which is actually less than the sub price. Beautifully bound with dust jacket. You can afford to pass your loose copies along to others by buying this volume for your library.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

A historian at Johns Hopkins U., writing in *Mid-Stream,* identifies three Bible belts in North America. The old one of course is the southern U.S., while the second runs across southern Canada from Toronto to Vancouver and the third being the West Coast, running from British Columbia to southern California. In detailing the third one he observes that in southern California "the Southern Baptists and churches of Christ fill a larger place." I was impressed that the old boy knows us so well as to name us "churches of Christ" with the lower case c. That is how we spell our name, you know, and it can only be motivated by courtesy that a scholar would resort to an ungrammatical anomaly like "churches of Christ," which is clearly a compound proper noun. Pray tell me, what difference there is in "churches of Christ" and "Churches of Christ"? Are we so naive as to suppose that one is a denominational name and the other is not? To the contrary, I note that usually when the great minds of history refer to the "Church of Christ" they use it in a catholic, ecumenical sense, such as Thomas Campbell: "That the Church or Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one," or John Locke: "How can that be called the Church of Christ which is established upon laws that are not His?"

Benjamin Rees, longtime missionary to Hong Kong, writing in the *Christian Standard,* reminds us that the lease on that Crown Colony of Great Britain runs out in 1997, at which time the island may again be part of China. He urges that Christians must "work for the night is coming," thus preparing the Hong Kong believers to operate underground. It serves as a reminder of the condition of the entire world. Is our time running out?

Ouida and I got a bang out of a biographical sketch of one of our noted debaters of recent years, appearing in *Torch,* which is published in Brandon, Florida. There was this big debate some years back between Guy N. Woods and Curtis Porter. When Woods attempted to put Porter in the same class with Leroy Garrett, Porter wisely responded with, "Do you have anything in common with Leroy Garrett?," which was an appropriate response to an ancient fallacy. But Woods held his own with this comeback: "Yes, but I am not as much like Leroy Garrett as you are." Ouida and I went to bed that night laughing at that one: the bad guy was the one most like me! When Ouida came down to breakfast the next morning, I clobbered her with "You are more like Leroy Garrett than I am!"

She fired back, not unlike the inimitable Guy N. Woods, who was trained in law, "I deny it!" Then when I tell her that Martin Luther, who lived in a man's world, insisted that a woman should not speak without first saying the Lord's prayer, she retorts with, "Why a woman?" So you can see how life here in Denton, Texas, goes for me sometime.

Chester and Angela Woodhall, missionaries to Zambia, Africa report that since 1971, when they began their mission, that the Copper-belt province of Zambia has grown from nine Churches of Christ to 25. This does not include Zaire, where there is another 101 churches. He is pleased with this progress and says he is on TV or radio nearly every day.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

I believe that the greatest discovery the Church of Christ of today could possibly make is that the Scriptures bear witness of the Word of God, which is Jesus. He is our peace. He is the foundation. He is the way. He is the truth. He is the light. He is the expressed Word of God. And he is our creed. The Bible is not. He is the object of our faith. The Bible is not. But thank God for the Bible, for it bears witness of the Word of God! We must preach the gospel, not the Scriptures. --- *Charles L. Hudson, LaGrange, Il.*

The freedom I now enjoy, to say what I believe openly; to pursue and to experience God afresh without the ever-present “watch-dogs”; to mix freely and comfortably with so many more Christians than ever before; to be treated as an equal with the elders and leaders of our congregation --- not a hireling; to enjoy and be inspired by all kinds of Christian music; to be able to encourage the musical giftedness of God’s children; to invite any Christian to speak and share freely with us. These are just a few of the precious joys I now have in Christ, and I do not intend to be “robbed” of that kind of freedom again. My friends in the Church of Christ I miss. The system of law and legal bondage to human opinions I deplore. --- *Stan Harbour, Christ’s Church, Roswell, NM*

The Campbell home is visited by thousands each year who make the pilgrimage to Bethany. It speaks quietly and eloquently of a faith generated from the American Frontier, grounded in Biblical study, and dedicated to the lordship of Jesus Christ. We are grateful that you have joined hands with others across the country to maintain this historic place. --- *Robert A. Sandercox, Bethany College, Bethany, WV 26032.*

(If you are interested in information on the old Campbell Mansion, or if you wish to contribute to its preservation, write to Mr. Sandercox at the address given. --- *Ed.*)

Some of us are not open to receive the messages in your publication and therefore I have tried to select those I feel will be appreciative of your efforts and will welcome the freedom you espouse. --- *Denton Gillen, Garden Grove, CA.*

I just paused for a few minutes before lunch from the court routine this morning and pondered some of the things you said in the May issue. They bless me. While I no longer am in a church that is of the name, Church of Christ, I am in a church, "Christ Fellowship", which is of the Restoration heritage, generally. By the grace and mercy of the living God we will continue to wage war against the forces of darkness. --- *John Acuff, Cookeville, Tenn.*

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